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RUSSIAN COVID VACCINE SAFE, SAYS LANCET STUDY

Sputnik V has been shown to elicit antibody response with no serious adverse effects in Phase I and II human trials

T-CELL RESPONSE WITHIN 28 DAYS

In an early-phase non-randomised vaccine trial involving 76 people, the two formulations of the vaccine demonstrated a good safety profile over 42 days, and induced antibody responses in all participants within 21 days. The vaccine also produced a T-cell response in participants within 28 days. The T-cells support immune function by killing the infected host cells

PHASE III TRIAL MAY INVOLVE INDIA

- Reports suggest that Russia is planning the Phase III trial of the vaccine involving 40,000 people in October
- Moscow is currently in talks with New Delhi to conduct the Phase III trial of the vaccine here. Moscow is also trying to get Indian manufacturers to mass-produce the vaccine | P9

Sputnik-5
IS A TWO-DOSE VACCINE. THE SECOND DOSE IS GIVEN 21 DAYS AFTER THE FIRST

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Peace tied to trust, non-aggression: Rajnath

Holds talks with his Chinese counterpart Wei in Moscow; Army Chief says soldiers ready for any contingency on LAC

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressing a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe, in Moscow on Friday | PTI

PUSHKAR BANAKAR AND MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

IN the first high-level face-to-face meeting since the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh became volatile in early May, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe in Moscow on Friday to resolve the stand-off.

Earlier political interactions were over telephone, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval speaking to their counterparts separately.

At the time of going to press, there was no clarity on the outcome of Friday's talks. But hours earlier, Singh set the tone for the bilateral dialogue by emphasising that peace in the region demands a climate of trust, cooperation and non-aggression.

He was addressing the combined meeting of Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organisation and Commonwealth of Independent States. "Peaceful, stable and secure region of SCO member states demands a climate of trust and cooperation, non-aggression, respect for international rules and norms, sensitivity to each other's interest and peaceful resolution of differences," he said. Wei was present during the address.

In Delhi, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said it will not be business as usual with China until the LAC situation is peaceful, adding the situation is "unprecedented". "We have lost, for the first time, lives of soldiers which has not happened in the last 40 years....The linkage between what happens at the border and relations are large. It cannot be business as usual with China unless there is peace at the border. The present India-China situation is the most serious challenge and India remains committed to its territorial integrity," Shringla said.

In Ladakh, Army Chief General M M Naravane said, "The situation along the LAC is tense. The troops are prepared for all contingencies." CONTINUED ON:

DIALOGUE IS THE ONLY WAY FORWARD: SHRINGLA

Addressing a webinar in Delhi, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said, "There has been amassing of troops. Both sides have been engaged through diplomatic and military channels. Dialogue is the only way forward and we are open to communication."

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RBI puts startups in priority basket, expands list of lending categories

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

Start-ups, small and marginal farmers and weaker sections will now get the priority sector tag. To ensure better credit penetration, the Reserve Bank of India on Friday revised its Priority Sector Lending (PSL) rules to include credit to start-ups (up to ₹50 crore), loans to farmers for installation of solar power plants and loans for setting up compressed biogas plants.

That apart, the targets prescribed for small and marginal farmers and weaker sections will be increased in a phased manner. Also, loan limits for renewable energy have been doubled under the revised norms.

To address the regional skew, the central bank has put in place an incentive framework for banks under which higher weightage will be assigned for incremental priority sector credit in specified districts.

Experts hailed the decision, calling it a policy enabler. "We believe that this is an ideal example of policy federalism adopted by the RBI in promoting financial and social inclusion in line with the Central government's agenda of providing financial inclusion to backward districts in the country. There could be some more policy options to further improve lending under PSL, in areas of education, housing, export credit and financial inclusion," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser of SBI.

The inclusion of start-ups will reduce their cost of capital by allowing them better access to bank credit and lower their reliance on equity funding.

Bank loans up to ₹30 crore to borrowers for purposes like solar-based power generators, biomass-based power generators, wind mills, micro-hydel plants and for non-conventional energy based public utilities, will be eligible for priority sector classification. For individual households, the loan limit will be ₹10 lakh per borrower.

EXPRESS READ

Bihar polls, 65 bypolls to be held at same time: EC

New Delhi: The pending by-elections to one Lok Sabha and 64 assembly seats spread across 15 states and the Bihar assembly polls will be held around the same time, the Election Commission (EC) said on Friday. here have been demands by some political parties to postpone the electoral exercise due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

B'luru Turf Club gets nod to conduct races

Bengaluru: The Bangalore Turf Club on Friday got the greenlight from the state government to conduct races, but without spectators. The dates for the resumption of the truncated season will only be decided after the managing committee meeting, which is expected to be known next week. P2

Panel report says DJ Halli riot planned

Bengaluru: Deeming the August 11 violence in DJ Halli, Bengaluru, a planned, organised attack by Muslim mobs targeting Hindus, an independent citizens' forum on Friday submitted its report to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa. The report accuses the SDPI and PFI of planning and executing the riot. P7

Actress Ragini's arrest blows lid off drug racket in Sandalwood

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Friday arrested popular Kannada actress Ragini Dwivedi for her alleged links with the drug racket in the Kannada film industry (Sandalwood). The police have also nabbed the prime accused Viren Khanna — termed as a 'big catch' — from New Delhi and also a realtor from Bengaluru, taking the total number of arrests to four.

Ragini was arrested after a thorough four-hour search of her Yelahanka residence early on Friday which was followed by five hours of grilling.

After filmmaker and journalist Indrajit Lankesh gave his statement to the CCB about drug abuse in Sandalwood, the police acted quickly and arrested K Ravishankar, an employee at the Jayanagar Regional Transport Office. He claimed to be a "close acquaintance" of Ragini, Police Commissioner Kamal Pant confirmed at a press conference on Friday afternoon.

Indrajit had earlier claimed on a TV channel that at least 15 persons from Sandalwood were involved in the drug trade.

During Ravishankar's interrogation, the police learnt about actors attending parties to consume drugs. He is said to have revealed to the police that he carried drugs, to be supplied to the guests at the parties. Ravishankar has been suspended after his alleged involvement came to light soon after his arrest.

Following the revelations, Ragini was served a notice by the CCB, summoning her to depose before them on Thursday. However, the actress is said to have sent her lawyers to request postponing her deposition until Monday, which the CCB rejected, and instead, asked her to depose before them on Friday. CONTINUED ON: P3

Kannada actor Ragini Dwivedi being brought for questioning in connection with the drug racket case at the CCB head office in Bengaluru on Friday | MEGHANA SASTRY

GANJA WORTH ₹7L SEIZED

Customs officials at Kempegowda International Airport seized 484 gm of marijuana being smuggled through an international courier flight on Friday. According to an official, they seized the drugs worth Rs 7.78 lakh. The shipment had been booked from Canada, he said.

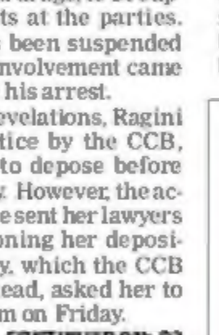
'MANAGERS' OF RAVE PARTIES NOW UNDER POLICE SCANNER

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

THE city has been rocked by a contraband drugs trade which has players from across the spectrum of society. Rave parties are held on invitation among closed circles and a range of contraband drugs — from curated marijuana, weed to MDMA, LSD blots and cocaine — are "sold" to the invitees. The venue of the rave parties is disclosed only at the last minute and is never hosted at the same place for a second time. The spotlight now is on some "event managers" of these rave parties.

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) police have unearthed an alleged nexus involving a government official, Ravishankar, Sandalwood actress Ragini Dwivedi, realtor Rahul Shetty and a party organiser Viren Khanna in the drug network in Bengaluru.

"We have just started the investigation in the drug trafficking and abuse case two days ago. The CCB has arrested some people and their interrogation will reveal more details. Some others are on the radar," said City Police Commissioner Kamal Pant. CONTINUED ON: P3



Rhea's bro, Sushant aide held for links to drug mafia

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

Showik Chakraborty

Samuel Miranda

THE Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday arrested actor Rhea Chakraborty's brother Showik Chakraborty and Sushant Singh Rajput's house manager Samuel Miranda, in connection with a drug probe linked to the actor's death.

Showik was arrested in the evening after interrogation at the NCB office. The NCB conducted the raid at Rhea's house on Friday, a day after alleged drug peddler Zaid Vilatra admitted dealings with Showik. It seized laptops, hard drives and other digital evidence.

Sushant's house manager Samuel Miranda was also detained, and subsequently, arrested by NCB on Friday. The agency had raided his office earlier in the day. "Now there will be interrogation regarding the WhatsApp chats of Showik, indicating drug procurement, that has gone viral," sources said.

The NCB registered a case last Wednesday after the Enforcement Directorate wrote to it. Soon afterwards, on the intervening night of August 27-28, the NCB carried out searches in Mumbai and two persons, namely Abbas Lakhani and Karan Arora were arrested, and the 'bud' was recovered from their possession. A detailed network analysis and the follow-up investigation, uncovered the linkages of Lakhani with Vilatra.

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ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

Homegrown FAU-G coming soon to replace PUBG

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

TWO days after the Centre banned the highly popular mobile gaming app PUBG, Bollywood star Akshay Kumar on Friday announced a made-in-India action game, set to be launched next month. The game, titled FAU-G, is being developed by Bengaluru-based nCore Games.

"Supporting PM @narendramodi's Atmanirbhar movement, proud to present an action game, Fearless And United-Guards FAU-G. Besides entertainment, players will also learn about the sacrifices of our soldiers," Kumar, whose tilt towards the ruling dispensation is well known, tweeted.

The game is reportedly based on real-life scenarios encountered by the Indian security forces as they deal with domestic and foreign threats. Its first level will be set against the backdrop of the Galwan Valley—the site of India-China clashes in June. It will be followed by third-person shooting gameplay.

The banishing of PUBG has created a huge void in the Indian mobile gaming arena, which every gaming developer is scrambling to fill.

But, experts say many Indian developers are missing the digital capabilities of Chinese giants like Tencent.

Dayanidhi MG, co-founder and CEO of nCore Games is nonetheless confident that his team can pull it off. "We managed genre-defining MOBA games like Vainglory of SuperEvil Megacorp for the worldwide audience. We have also worked with global studios like Rovio," he said. CITY EXPRESS: P3